

## "VIEWPOINT" by Robert Moore

A University is to be established in our midst and as you no doubt know all links between this Institution and the University of the West Indies are to be severed. There is no question here of a Liberal Arts College operating under the guidance of the larger and older unit. No, the University of Guyana will stand alone. It will be totally responsible for its own syllabuses, the standards it maintains, the kind of degree it awards and the way in which it awards them.

From a nationalist point of view this is fair enough. After all, if we are going to be an independent in fact and not merely in polite diplomatic usage, then we must have a body of citizens trained to make this independence worthwhile. And this they can only do by taking an intelligent participation in the processes of social change. What is more, we want people who have been made aware of the difference between prejudice and thought; people who can think in terms of the community as a whole and not merely in terms of that section to which they belong or the vested interest which they serve. Equally important is the fact that such an institution will go a far way to solving the problem of those who have always wanted to advance their studies but have never had either the money or the time to go abroad.

All this is good and it greatly redounds to the credit of the government to bring these opportunities in our midst. But in our enthusiasm to improve the quality of our citizens we must not lose our sense of perspective. Of course, we want people who can follow an argument, but we also - and this is important - want people who can detect a fallacy. And to train students in the latin art is not as easy as to instruct them in the former. If our local university offers the sort of courses in which chunks of information are given out and definitions of subjects are thought, then it will in fact be more akin to a glorified high school than a genuine university.

In this matter we must take care lest we reproduce here in Guyana some of the features that make the lesser academic Institutions of the United States so valueless for higher learning. We don't want people who have been given a superficial knowledge of a number of subjects but who cannot go below the surface. Such an education may be good for conversation but is of little relevance to the immense problems of an underdeveloped country. And this brings me to the crux of the matter. A country with problems like ours needs not only a large number of people with something of an advanced education, it needs - and this is vital - a group of creative and high-powered minds which have undergone a severe academic discipline. It is this sort of person who will set to work on the untractable problems and who will strike out paths or adopt the methods used elsewhere with creative selectivity. This sort of mind will not be sufficiently stretched, or provoked, or deepened by the kind of courses to be offered by our local university. What is more this type of mind is at its best when it has been in contact with a teacher of the finest calibre and that sort of person is not easy to find at this time. As you may have noticed a large number of Universities are mushrooming the world over and the problem is now that of too many academic institutions chasing too few first class brains.

So our really good Guianese brain will in the last resort have to go abroad. And it is him that one wishes that some sort of connection with the U.W.I. were maintained. For it is in that institution that the peculiar problems of this area - the economic, social, educational and even political problems - are being carefully examined by an assemblage of highly competent, and in some cases, first class minds. Here, if anywhere, the really good Guianese student can find material to assist and stimulation to inspire him in the approach to his country's problems. But we will sever all connections with that institution and this, I think, is a pity. Here we could well take a leaf out of the Russian book. For there they pay very great attention to producing students of the highest quality by an academic system at once severe, thorough, rigorous and above all brilliantly planned.

\*\*\*\*\*